

2014/2015 ISD Facts and FAQs

1. The (June 2013) Record of Decision (ROD) for the Imperial Sand Dunes (ISD) Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) provides management guidance for the 164,000 acres¹ encompassing the Imperial Sand Dunes Special Recreation Management Area and 50,000 acres of public lands in the surrounding area.
2. The BLM developed the RAMP to provide a world-class recreational experience while aiding in the recovery of listed species. It provides sustainable recreation opportunities while balancing conservation of natural resources and addresses a wide range of issues such as: recreation, public health and safety, air quality, natural and cultural resources, wilderness characteristics, areas of critical environmental concern, cultural resources, and renewable energy.
3. The RAMP ensures continued economic benefits for the local communities who provide goods and services to the families that recreate in the dunes.
4. The RAMP achieves the BLM's mission by designating approximately 127,000 acres as "Open to OHV" recreation, approximately 9,000 acres as "Closed to OHV" to protect critical habitat for Pierson's milk-vetch, and continued to management of the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness as closed.
5. The BLM is beginning the implementation of the ISD RAMP. Besides outreach and education, the first changes in the dunes that visitors are likely to notice are:
 - a. Opening the 49,300 acres of administrative closures.
 - b. Prohibiting OHV recreation within Pierson's Milk-vetch Critical Habitat.
 - c. Prohibiting camping between Wash 33 and Wash 70 to protect sensitive species habitat in the microphyll woodlands.

FAQs

Q - Where are the new closures and how can I learn more about them?

A - See attached map and visit www.blm.gov/ca/isdra, specifically, the Record of Decision and Recreation Area Management Plan.

Q - How are the boundaries going to be marked in the dunes?

A - The closed area boundary will be marked in the same manner as the previous administrative closures, with fiberglass posts.

Q - Is the Sand Highway to Patton Valley (northeast / southwest direction) closed?

A - Yes, however the Sand Highway on the west side of the dunes (northwest / southeast direction) remains open.

Q - How can I get to Patton Valley?

¹ All acreages are approximates.

A - You will have to ride / drive to Patton Valley through the dunes around the eastern side of the new closures.

Q - Why isn't there an open corridor to Patton Valley?

A – The BLM based all closures on scientific monitoring of Pierson's Milk-vetch to balance sustainable OHV recreation and conservation. The previous Sand Highway area to Patton Valley was included in monitoring cells which had high populations of Pierson's Milk-vetch. In order to develop a balanced and defensible plan, and to reopen the 49,000 acres of administrative closures, the BLM will manage 100% of critical habitat as closed to OHV recreation.

Q - Is Test Hill / Freeway Hill Closed?

A - No. It remains open; however, there will be a closure on the north side of that dune, just south of the next valley.

Q - If I am riding and break down, can I drive through the closure to get back to camp?

A - If you violate the closure, you are subject to citation and/or arrest. Visitors have the legal alternative to go to the eastern side of the dunes to get to "Hard Pack" ground and coordinate with friends / family to retrieve their vehicle.

Q - Why does the closure have such an irregular shape?

A - The closure boundaries follow the Pierson's Milk-vetch critical habitat designation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The designation follows the boundaries of the monitoring cells (25 meters by 25 meters) of actual high density populations of Pierson's Milk-vetch observed in 2005.

Q - Why didn't the BLM straighten out the closure boundaries instead of using the irregularly shaped critical habitat boundaries established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

A - The BLM based the RAMP on the best available science. If the boundaries were straightened, critical habitat would have been opened to OHV recreation, or open OHV lands would have been closed. Neither decision would have been scientifically based or defensible.

Q - Why should I comply with the closures?

A – Compliance will protect your future OHV recreation opportunities and natural resources in the Imperial Sand Dunes. The BLM will be enforcing the closures to protect and conserve Pierson's Milk-vetch. If you violate the closure, you may be subject to citation and/or arrest. The BLM will also monitor and document closure violations and submit an annual report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Q - Why are "The Washes" closed to camping from Wash 33 to Wash 70?

A - This area is closed to camping, but open to OHV recreation, to maintain recreation opportunities while mitigating the impacts to the microphyll woodlands habitat for plant and animal species.

